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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 /073 W
----------078754 221618Z /45
P R 221430Z MAY 78
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8228
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAO PAULO 1499

THIS MESSAGE PREPARED BY CONSUL GENERAL CHAPIN BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE

E.0. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT,MBR
SUBJ: POLITICAL TENSIONS IN BRAZIL

SUMMARY: IN A TETE-A-TETE LUNCH WITH MY CLOSEST BRAZILIAN BUSINESSMAN FRIEND MAY 19, HE TOLD ME THAT FIGUEIREDO IS LOSING GROUND DAILY AND HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT FIGUEIREDO WILL BE ELECTED ON OCTOBER 15. HE SAID POLITICAL EVENTS WERE ACCELERATING AND THAT FIGUEIREDO DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND. GEN. EULER BENTES DE MONTEIRO IS CONSIDERED THE PRESENT ALTERNATIVE TO FIGUEIREDO, BUT THE CHOICE COULD SHIFT TO GEISEL'S FORMER MILITARY HOUSEHOLD CHIEF, GEN. HUGO DE ABREU, OR POSSIBLY TO GEN. AYRTON TOURINHO. OPPOSTION TO FIGUEIREDO WITHIN THE MILITARY IS WIDESPREAD, BUT IT IS DIVIDED INTO FACTIONS, HENCE THE CURRENT LACK OF CLARITY. GEISEL'S HEALTH IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS EQUATION. THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO FIGUEIREDO IS HOPING THAT THE PRESSURES ON GEISEL WILL EXACERBATE HIS HEALTH CONDITION, TRIGGERING A MAJOR STROKE WHICH WOULD REMOVE HIM FROM THE PRESIDENCY. HE STATED THAT THERE IS WIDESPREAD PLOTTING BY JUNIOR OFFICERS TO BRING ABOUT A DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN THE REVOLUTION. SOURCE FOUND SIMILAR ACTIVITY IN BRASILIA, RIO AND SAO PAULO.
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SOURCE SAID THAT, IN ANTICIPATION OF CHANGE, HE WAS WORKING WITH FORMER FINANCE MINISTER DELFIM NETTO TO FORM A NEW NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTY, HAND PICKING CANDIDATES TO BACK IN THE NOVEMBER'S CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BRAZIL TODAY IS FRAGILE AND TENSE, SAID MY CLOSEST BRAZILIAN BUSINESSMAN FRIEND MAY 19. BEFORE

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ENTERING INTO DETAILS, IT WOULD BE WELL TO CHARACTERIZE HIM. HE IS A CLOSE FRIEND OF DELFIM NETTO AND HAS HAD A MAJOR ECONOMIC POSITION IN ONE OF THE POST 1964 GOVERNMENTS. HE IS ALSO CLOSE TO GOVERNOR PAULO EGYDIO. THE FOLLOWING IS THE RESULT OF A LONG CONVERSATION AT A TETE-A-TETE LUNCHEON AT HIS REQUEST IN VIEW OF MY IMMINENT DEPARTURE.

2. FIGUEIREDO'S CANDIDACY: FIGUEIREDO IS LOSING GROUND DAILY AND THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND DOES NOT SUPPORT HIM. (SOURCE WAS SUMMONED TO BRASILIA MAY 17 BY GENERAL AYRTON TOURINHO, A FOUR STAR GENERAL MEMBER OF THE HIGH COMMAND, AND BROTHER-IN-LAW OF GENERAL REYNALDO DE ALMEIDA, ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY CONSIDERED ALTERNATES PRIOR TO THE DESIGNATION OF FIGUEIREDO AS THE OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. TOURINHO WAS THE COMMANDER OF THE 5TH MILITARY REGION IN PARANA AND A LONG TIME FRIEND OF MY SOURCE. TOURINHO'S GRANDSON LIVES IN SOURCE'S HOUSE AND THE SONS ARE THE BEST OF FRIENDS. THE FRIENDSHIP DATES BACK 20 YEARS OR MORE. TOURNIHO IS THE MOST OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC OF THE GENERALS I HAVE ENCOURTERED IN SIX YEARS IN BRAZIL.) SOURCE CONSIDERES RETIRED GENERAL EULER BENTES THE PRESENT ALTERNATIVE TO FIGUEIREDO, BUT IF HIS CANDIDACY IS CONFIRMED FORMALLY, THE KEY QUESTION IS PRESIDENT GEISEL'S REACTION. IF EULER IS NOT THE CANDIDATE, THE CURRENT POLITICAL MANIPULATORS ARE WILLING TO GO FOR MAJOR GENERAL HUGO ABREU, THE FORMER CHIEF OF GEISEL'S MILITARY HOUSEHOLD, WHO WAS PASSED OVER FOR PROMOTION TO FOUR STAR. GEISEL'S REACTION TO THE SELECTION OF HUGO ABREU, WHOM HE FIRED, IS EXPECTED TO BE EVEN CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE EXTREME. WHILE THERE IS A BROAD SPECTRUM OF OPPOSITION TO FIGUEIREDO, IT IS DIVIDED INTO FACTIONS. SOURCE, ALLIED WITH DELFIM NETTO, IS ATTEMPTING TO THWART WHAT HE CONSIDERS THE EXCESSIVELY NATIONALISTIC AND CONSERVATIVE CANDIDACY OF GENERAL EULER, SUPPORTED BY EULER'S CLOSE FRIEND, EX-MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY SEVERO GOMES, WHO NOMINALLY IS STILL THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ON THE RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY OF SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO. SOURCE IS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO GENERAL TOURINHO AS THE MDB AND DEMOCRATIC COALITION FRONT CANDIDATE, BUT STATES THAT TOURINHO IS TOO TIMID. NEVERTHELESS, HE IS CONSIDERED AN OPEN, LIBERAL (IN THE CLASSIC SENSE) AND HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE PERSONALITY WITH AN EXCELLENT PHYSICAL PRESENCE FOR VOTERS ON PUBLIC PLATFORMS. (THIS ESTIMATE I SHARE FROM PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE.)

3. GEISEL'S HEALTH AND PERSONALITY (BRASILIA 3680):
SOURCE ACCOMPANIED PRESIDENT GEISEL ON HIS VISIT TO GERMANY AND SAID HE HAD A MILD STROKE WHILE THERE. HE HAD A MORE SERIOUS ONE WHILE ATTENDING THE CEREMONY FOR NEW DIPLOMATS AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE WHERE HE LOST CONTROL OF HIS BOWELS AND BLADDER. THIS MADE A TOTAL OF FIVE MILD EPISODES OR SPASMS IN RECENT MONTHS, ACCORDING TO SOURCE. THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO GEISEL WAS

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HOPING THAT THE FORMAL CANDIDACY OF EULER BENTES OR HUGO ABREU WOULD TRIGGER MAJOR AND INCAPACITATING STROKE WHICH WOULD REMOVE HIM FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND INSTALL THE VICE PRESIDENT (DESCRIBED AS COMPLETELY SENILE), WHO WOULD BE SURROUNDED BY SEVERAL OTHER MILITARY FIGURES, INCLUDING TOURINHO. SOURCE SAID THEY WERE COUNTING ON GEISEL'S CHOLERIC AND MERCURIAL PERSONALITY TO ACHIVE THEIR MINIMUM OBJECTIVES.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 /073 W
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INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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4. PLOTTING BY JUNIOR MILITARY OFFICERS: SOURCE SAID THAT AFTER MEETING WITH GENERAL TOURINHO IN BRASILIA HD HAD GONE AT 1 A.M. AND REMAINED FOR TWO HOURS WITH TWO ARMY MAJORS. THERE WAS EXTENSIVE PLOTTING TO EFFECT DEMOCRATIC CHAGE IN THE REVOLUTION, WITH JUNIOR OFFICERS TRAVELING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. SKED WHETHER THIS WAS NOT SIMPLY A SPLIT BETWEEN UPPER AND LOWER LEVELS IN THE MILITARY HIERARCHY, SOURCE SAID CATEGORICALLY IT WAS PLOTTING AND NOT JUST A SPLIT.

5. THE RIO CHAPTER: SOURCE SAID HE WENT ON TO RIO WHERE HE MET WITH TWO COLONELS AND SEPARATELY WITH COLONEL PAES LEME, IN WHOE APARTMENT GENERAL FIGUEIREDO NOT ONLY HAS HIS PLITICAL MEETINGS BUT HIS FREQUENT ASSIGNATIONS WITH A WIFE VARIETY OF RIO PROSTITUTES. THE FORMER GROUP WAS ALSO ENGAGED IN UNDERMINING THE FIGUEIREDO CANDIDACY, WHILE THE LATTER WAS VISIBLY SHAKEN AND NERVIOUS BY THE FAILURE OF THE FIGUEIREDO CANDIDACY TO TAKE OFF. SOURCE HAD MET WITH DELFIM NETTO IN RIO AND THEY RETURNED TOGETHER TO SAO PAULO ON THE EVENING OF MAY 18.

6. DELFIM'S PLANS: SOURCE SAID DELFIM AND HE WERE PLANNING A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT MODERATE CANDIDATES OF BOTH PARTIES

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IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. THESE POLITICINS WOULD BE THE CORE
OF THE NEW POLITICAL PARTY TO BE HEADED BY DELFIM. THEY WERE
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PREPARING FOR ANY EVENTUALITY: A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO BE CALLED
Y PRESIDENT GEISEL, IN THE EVENT THAT HE DUMPED THE FIGUEIREDO
CANDIDACY; ELECTIONS ON A TWO PARTY BASIS IN NOVEMBER; ELECTIONS
ON A NON-PARTY BASIS; THE CREATION OF NEW PARTIES AFTER THE NOVEMBER
ELECTION; OR THE CREATION OF NEW PARTIES FOLLOWING A CONSTITUENT
ASSEMBLY. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO IDENTIFY MODERATE, OPEN
PERSONS WITH A RECOGNITION THAT BRAZIL HAD TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT
ROLE IN THE WORLD. THEY WERE DRAWING UP LISTS. DELFIM WOULD
START IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL AND WORK NORTH. GOVERNOR JAIME CANET
HAD ALREAY TALKED TO SOURCE IN BRASILIA AND WOULD PROVIDE NAMES
FOR PARANA. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE PERSONS TO WHOM THEY WERE
LOOKING, SOURCE CITED HIS GOOD FRIEND, FORMER MAYOR OF LONDRINA,
PARANA, JOSE RICHA, ONE OF THE TWO MDB SENATORIAL CANDIDATES
IN PARANA.

7. OVERALL COMMENT: SOURCE SAID THAT POLITICAL EVENTS IN
BRAZIL WERE ACCELERATING. HE DOUBTED THAT GENERAL FIGUEIREDO
WOULD BE ELECTED ON OCTOBER 15. WE WOULD MEET NEXT WEEK IN NEW
YORK AT THE MAN OF THE YEAR DINNER OF THE BRAZIL AMERICAN CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND THERE MIGHT BE MORE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS
BY THEN.
TELLER

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